DESCHUTES COLLABORATIVE FOREST PROJECT

Wednesday, May 9, 2012

John Allen, Forest Supervisor
U.S. Forest Service – Deschutes National Forest
63095 Deschutes Market Road
Bend, Oregon 97701

Mr. Allen:

On behalf of the Steering Committee and Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project (DCFP) stakeholders, I respectfully submit the attached recommendations for consideration in the planning and implementation of projects on the DCFP landscape. These recommendations address the restoration of second-growth ponderosa pine, a stand condition that is over-represented and significantly ecologically departed within the DCFP landscape.

Over the past four months members of the DCFP Restoration Planning Sub-committee met four times to discuss and generate recommendations that fulfill the intent of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Act to advance "collaborative, science-based ecosystem restoration" that is ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable. The Sub-committee chose the issue of second-growth ponderosa pine restoration because of the potential "win-win" opportunity presented by setting these stands on a trajectory towards ecological resilience, while in the process promoting important local social and economic values. In that vein, the Sub-committee drew from the best available science, as well as technical expertise from researchers, academics, and agency staff, to gather information and increase their understanding of the scope and scale of restoration need. The outcome of this process was the collaborative common ground that made these recommendations possible.

Last week the DCFP Steering Committee reviewed and endorsed the recommendations advanced by the Sub-committee. The Committee evaluated the recommendations through the lens of ecological, economic, and social sustainability to ensure they were based on sound science, operationally feasibly, and broadly representative of community values. I am proud to report that the second-growth ponderosa pine recommendations were approved with greater than the 2/3 majority. Per our collaborative decision-making process, I have attached the minority report submitted to express the one area of disagreement regarding the retention of old-growth trees based on morphological characteristics. During discussion of the minority opinion, the group briefly explored the idea of a project-specific agreement to use retention guidelines based on old-growth morphology in lieu of diameter limit guidelines and noted the need to discuss this further.

As in the past, we thank you for your vision, leadership, and support, both within the agency and externally among DCFP stakeholders. Without your commitment to the success of the Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project we would not have achieved so much in such a short time. I, Phil Chang, and Pete Caligiuri would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and the appropriate leadership to discuss the details of these recommendations and answer any question you may have.

Sincerely,

Alan Unger

Alan Unger
Chair, DCFP Steering Committee

Cc: Kristie Miller, Sisters Ranger District; Shane Jeffries, Bend-Ft. Rock Ranger District
Attachments: Second-growth Ponderosa Pine Restoration Recommendations and Minority Report

Restoration Recommendation Framework by Forest Type

Approved by the Steering Committee, Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project 5/1/12

1. Landscape-level recommendations integrate an ecologically-based approach to restoring forest structure, composition, pattern and process according to the **Historic Range of Variability (HRV)** appropriate for each forest type. The sub-committee agrees to use **Plant Association Group (PAG** or forest type) and HRV to guide the development of recommendations that aim to achieve a desired future condition of a healthy and resilient fire-adapted forest across the landscape.

Sub-committee Recommendations:

Dry/Wet Second-growth Ponderosa Pine:
• Use the historic range of variability (HRV) to guide landscape-scale planning, design and implementation to narrow the gap between current and historic conditions in terms of structure, composition, pattern and process:
  ○ Utilize best available science regarding estimates of historic range of successional class distributions (structural descriptions based on age and density and maintained by historic fire regime), including the size, quantity and arrangement of each class at the landscape-, project-, and stand-scale
  ○ Recognize the understory component of HRV in terms of native shrub and herbaceous species composition and diversity
  ○ Recognize over-abundance of second-growth, mid-seral closed ponderosa pine stand conditions (i.e. “blackbark) and the “deficit” in both early-seral and late-seral open stand conditions
  ○ Focus restoration efforts on moving towards a range of stand conditions that more closely resembles the HRV, while decreasing risk to and increasing resilience of second-growth pine stands
• Increase resiliency to natural processes (e.g., fire, insects, pathogens) by creating more diverse and variable stand types and conditions
• Increase area where landscape-, project-, and stand-level conditions are able to support fire (prescribed or natural start) as an appropriate tool and process to achieve restoration goals and maintain resilient forest conditions
• Restoration in second-growth ponderosa pine stands should focus on what is being left after treatment (i.e., desired conditions) rather than what is removed during treatment
• Recognize and take into account important local values in the planning, design, and implementation of restoration activities at the landscape-, project- and stand-scale in second-growth ponderosa pine forests, including:
  ○ Economic values (e.g., forest products industry and infrastructure, forest jobs, outdoor recreation sector),
  ○ Social values (e.g., recreation access, quality of life, scenic views, community wildfire protection, wildlife),
  ○ Ecological values (e.g. , natural disturbance processes, forest/soil productivity, flora and fauna biodiversity, wildlife habitat)

2. Project-level recommendations integrate the ecologically-based, landscape-level recommendations with **collaborative values** and **forest management objectives**. The characteristics and purpose and need of each planning area dictate the values and constraints that should be considered at the project-level.

Sub-committee Recommendations:
Dry/Wet Second-growth Ponderosa Pine: • Use context of landscape-level HRV to inform the planning, design, and implementation of project-level treatments. • Increase variability in the structure, density, and size/age classes within a range that is appropriate to site conditions and forest type • Increase variability in the pattern and arrangement of treated and untreated patches, gaps, and openings within a range that is appropriate to site conditions and forest type • Use variation in site condition/productivity, topography, aspect, and soils to inform the quantity, size, type, and intensity of treatments and retention areas within a range that imitates natural disturbance processes in line with best available science: o Create gaps and openings in mid-seral closed stands at a range of sizes to create early seral conditions o Leave a percentage of existing mid-seral closed stands in untreated patches at a range of sizes based on needs (wildlife, aesthetics, etc.) or harvest and replant at variable densities if necessary, to maintain dense, mid-seral closed conditions, which provide hiding cover and corridors for wildlife o Thin mid-seral closed stands to create mid-seral open stands, which over time can be treated again to develop into late-seral open conditions, (or left untreated to maintain late-seral closed conditions, if needed) o Thin to a range of densities (e.g., BA 40-140 ft^2/acre) o Ensure that implementation achieves basal area targets set in prescription • Utilize appropriate restoration treatments (e.g., mechanical thinning, mowing, and prescribed fire) to promote diverse understory vegetation conditions and native shrub and herbaceous species

3. Stand-level recommendations integrate landscape- and project-scale recommendations with concrete, on-the-ground prescriptions for restoration treatments in stands with specific issues that have had a lack of management agreement among stakeholders in the past.

Such fine-scale guidance may not be necessary for stand types where there is broad agreement on desired outcomes. However, in certain stand conditions, these recommendations could help increase support for management and help planning teams, silviculturalists, foresters, marking crews, and equipment operators appropriately and efficiently envision, locate, and implement collaborative restoration recommendations.

It is important that stand-level prescriptive recommendations be realistic and operationally feasible, using lessons learned from other projects within the CFLRP landscape.

Sub-committee Recommendations:
Dry/Wet Second-growth Ponderosa Pine: • Promote ponderosa pine as the dominant species appropriate to the forest type • Utilize and/or enhance existing structural opportunities on the landscape (openings, clumps, high density patches, low density patches, snags and coarse woody debris) where present to achieve variability at the stand level • Due to their infrequency in second-growth stands, retain old-growth characteristic trees of all species using a morphological characteristic guide – not age-based – (e.g., the Van Pelt guide) with some exceptions for hazard and dwarf mistletoe infected trees • In second-growth ponderosa pine stands with high levels of dwarf mistletoe, create openings at a range of sizes to reduce extent and severity of dwarf mistletoe infection • Use variable density thinning and variable spacing to create a mosaic/range of stand conditions (i.e. gappy, patchy, clumpy) in terms of structure, density, and size/age classes at the stand and within-stand level • Consider interaction of site condition/productivity, topography, aspect, soils, and natural disturbance processes (e.g. fire) when refining appropriate stand-level targets (e.g., structure, density, composition)   o Consider interaction of the same site factors when implementing restoration treatments to promote native shrub and herbaceous species diversity at the stand and within-stand level • Use stand reconstruction research (where available) to better understand and refine treatments to achieve stand-level structure, pattern, and composition goals

Second-growth Ponderosa Pine Recommendations
Minority Report to the DCFP Steering Committee
Chris C. Johnson
Industry Representative
Interfor – Gilchrist, Oregon
May 1, 2012

I agree with the recommendations that the DCFP Restoration Planning Sub-committee has produced for management of dry/wet second-growth ponderosa pine with the exception of the 3rd bullet of recommendations at the stand level.

As required, I will list the specific recommendation with which I disagree and provide an alternative suggestion with which I would agree.

Disagree with recommendation found on page 4, stand-level recommendations:

> "Due to their infrequency in second-growth stands, retain old-growth characteristic trees of all species (using Van Pelt guide) with some exceptions for hazard and dwarf-mistletoe infected trees"

I suggest striking out this recommendation for the following reasons:

> Eastside screens already contain the requirement to "maintain all remnant late and old seral and/or structural live trees > 21" dbh that currently exist within stands proposed for harvest activities."
>
> Determining age of trees is not simple, can be prohibitively costly if coring, and very subjective if using a guide.
>
> A base age is uncertain.
>
> The age limit is another unnecessary constraint to timber management in addition to a diameter limit
>
> History has shown a constant downward pressure on diameter limits already in place. I see no reason to believe this will not also be the case with an age limit.
>
> Is density reduction to produce long-term health and resiliency less important than retention of older individual trees?